

1. On the Employment of the Remora by Native Fishermen on the East Coast of Africa. By FREDERIC HOLMWOOD, H.B.M. Consul Zanzibar.

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About two years since, whilst making a trip from Pemba to Zanzibar in a steam-launch, I noticed several small fishes darting from under the stern, when from time to time ashes, scraps of food, and other things were thrown overboard.

On examination I observed that these fishes had attached themselves to the sides of the boat quite regardless of the noise and disturbance of the water caused by the screw. On endeavouring to remove them I found that they were most determined in retaining their hold, but a native on board at once detached one from the planking by drawing it off sideways. It appeared to be a small Sucking-fish of about half a pound in weight; the native told me it was called "Chazo"; he evidently knew the fish perfectly well, but volunteered no information as to its being employed by the native fishermen.

Shortly after this, while driving in the country, I passed a native engaged in finishing off a small canoe which had been hewn from a fallen mango-tree. As it appeared too small to be of any practical use, I inquired for what purpose it was intended. He replied "for Chaza," and on further questioning him I could obtain no other answer.

"Chaza" being the native name for the oyster and other bivalves found along the shore, I imagined that the canoe was intended for skirting the coast in the shallow tideways whilst collecting shell-fish, which are here obtained in large quantities during spring-tides; but, never having seen a canoe of this kind in use, my curiosity was roused, and on returning home I asked a servant, who had been brought up in a fishing-village, in what district these small craft were employed. He told me they were used as "houses" for a fish called the "Chazo," and that most fishermen kept them in their huts. This brought to my recollection the small fish I had noticed during the recent voyage from Pemba, and led to my making further inquiries, in the course of which I learnt that the Sucker-fish was reared and trained by the native fishermen of Zanzibar for the purpose of catching Turtle, Tortoise, and the larger fish.

I had once before, when travelling in Madagascar, been told incidentally a story of Sharks and even Crocodiles being captured by the natives by means of a fish called "Tarundu," which was trained for the purpose; but at that time I was new to the country and had only an imperfect knowledge of the language, and no doubt also showed my incredulity so plainly that my informants refrained from again referring to the subject.

Now, however, I could see that there must be some truth in the story, and I determined to ascertain what the facts really were. With this object I visited the various fishing-villages along the coast, and found that every one knew of the use of the "Chazo," though they were not very communicative regarding it, nor did they invite me to enter their huts where I should have seen it. This was no doubt partly owing to suspicion, for these fishermen are an exclusive body, living mostly apart from the rest of the population, and, knowing that the English had just put an end to the time-honoured custom of slave-running, in which pursuit they had borne a considerable share, they possibly imagined we might have an intention of interfering with them in other ways.

Eventually I succeeded in allaying suspicion in one village, and was shown several of these fishes. They were in appearance something like a Conger Eel, with a smooth and apparently scaleless skin; they were without the dorsal fin, but had on the top of the head an oval laminated disk or sucker. They varied from 2 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet in length, and in weight from two to seven or eight pounds.

They were mostly kept in small canoes similar to the one which had first attracted my attention, and at once came to the surface of the water on the approach of the fisherman, whom they allowed to take them from the water and handle them freely without attempting to plunge or break away. The owners called them with a soft whistling sound, but I had no means of observing whether this was recognized by the fish.

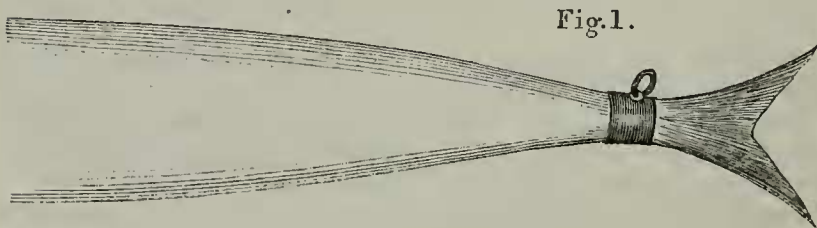


Fig. 1.

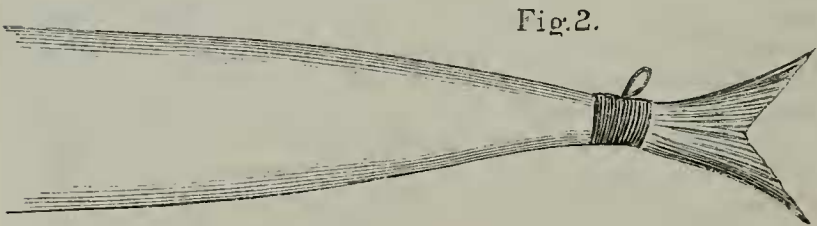


Fig. 2.

Fig. 1. Tail-end of Remora, with wrought-iron band and ring.

Fig. 2. Ditto, with ring fixed on by wire.

Each Chazo had a strong iron ring or loop fixed just above the tail (fig. 1) for the purpose of attaching a line to when being employed in

hunting. In some cases these appendages had evidently remained on for years, during which the fish had so grown that the iron had become imbedded in a thick fleshy formation. In two instances the ring had been inserted in the muscular substance at the root of the tail, but generally a simple iron band was welded round the thinnest part of the body a few inches from the tail, which kept it from slipping off. To this was riveted a small movable ring or loop resembling that of a watch-handle. In one case (fig. 2) this loop was fastened on by servings of brass wire in a similar manner to the rings of a fishing-rod.

It was some weeks before I succeeded in purchasing one of these fish; I proposed sending it to the International Fisheries Exhibition, but it was killed by some Cranes; and a second one which I obtained died, probably through want of sufficient water, it having been placed in a small stone tank, in consequence of my being unable to procure one of the small canoes.

I afterwards arranged to purchase another on its return from a fishing-trip. It was brought to me a few weeks later minus its ring, and with a large wound or rent above the tail, part of which was gone. The owner declared that it had caught two Turtle, which he showed me lying in his canoe, and that it had afterwards affixed itself to a large Shark and, holding on after all the spare line had been paid out, the tail had given way. He stated that the Chazo had then relinquished its hold and returned in its mutilated state to the boat. He assured me this was not an unusual occurrence, and that after a time a fresh ring would be attached and the fish become as useful as before. I endeavoured to preserve one of these Chazos in spirits of wine, but failed owing to the inferior quality of the spirit. This specimen measured 2 feet 8 inches in length and weighed  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. The sucker contained twenty-three pairs of lamellæ.

I was anxious to visit the fishing-grounds in order personally to verify the information collected regarding the employment of this fish; but as the trips made by the fishermen never occupy less than fifteen days, my accompanying them was out of the question, and I had no boat sufficiently large to make the voyage safely.

On my return to Zanzibar, however, I hope to arrange such a visit, and may then be able to supplement this paper, which does not pretend to any scientific value, with a full and accurate report on the whole subject.

In the meantime this short account of what was recently heard and seen as to the use of the Remora on the east coast of Africa may perhaps prove useful by directing attention to an interesting zoological question.